

of our workforce. With minor accommodations they can become an even more important part of our society and be involved in strengthening America's communities, businesses, and government. That is why I am so thankful to President Bush, who has highlighted the need to make workplaces, housing, education, technology, and our society in general, more accessible to all Americans. The President's new Freedom Initiative is an important proposal which calls for funding of a broad range of programs that together can help create countless new opportunities for many Americans who continually face unnecessary obstacles because of their disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, I am eager to work with President Bush to make this new Freedom Initiative a reality. To this end, I recently sent a letter co-signed by 23 of my colleagues to the House appropriators seeking their support in providing funds for the President's proposals. This is an issue on which we can all come together regardless of party background and help open doors for millions of people who are eager to conquer new challenges.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I extend my heartfelt thanks to the dozens of people who have made my tenure in Congress possible. Ensuring that some day every workplace in America will be able to respond to the special needs of employees in the same way is one of my top priorities in Congress. When that happens, we will all benefit from the remarkable talents and contributions of the millions of Americans with disabilities who are eager to pursue their dreams just as I have.

TRIBUTE TO BIRDIE KYLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, in the rush to greatness upon which many of us embark in this city, in the heat of the TV camera lights, in the chaos of clashing interests, it is important that we pause and take stock of those who brought us here, keep us here, and help make us. So this evening I thank and I pay respect to my long-time legislative director Birdie Kyle who passed away over our recent work period.

Birdie once wrote, "I am a native West Virginian born in Fayette County at MacDunn but raised up on Cabin Creek in the coalfields. I was born in a one-room abandoned boxcar. When I was little, my older sister tormented me when she felt like it by calling me 'Old Boxcar Bill.' I do not remember which made me the madder, being reminded that I was born in a boxcar or being called Bill when I was a girl. Probably both."

That was Birdie Kyle writing for West Virginia's Goldenseal Magazine in 1980.

Well, Boxcar Bill traveled far from her humble beginnings, but she never lost sight of the hills of home or the people there.

Birdie Kyle, a true coal miner's daughter, a native West Virginian in every sense, served West Virginia and our Nation in the Congress for more than 3 decades. Birdie served with me since 1989, and I appreciate deeply her loyalty and dedication. Before that, she spent most of her career with the late Senator Jennings Randolph.

Her mainstay of work for the Senator and for me was education. For Birdie, education was not a part of one's life. It was life itself. Teachers captivated her. Students compelled her.

Books were with her always, from her earliest moments to her latest nights. If books were her backbone, words were her blood. She was the mother of wordsmiths and, boy, could she make me sound good.

Birdie's letters, more often than not, prompted replies, and I got more kudos from her letters than anything.

Her list of legislative responsibilities in my office over the years reads like a record of the republic itself: Education to health care, the Postal Service to the Middle East. As one person who called to express their sympathy said, "She knew everything and everybody."

How true. She could converse on every subject, but that was not her most unique attribute. She did not care if one was king or commoner. She was going to sway you to her belief before you left the building, and most of the time she did.

Will there ever be another Birdie Kyle? No. Can one person fill her shoes? No.

Birdie was, in addition, the poet laureate of the office. Each Christmas and on my birthday she composed wonderful verses that not only made me feel special but it was so wonderful I started believing it.

She gave me my voice on many issues, issues of life and death, on wealth and poverty, on education and ignorance, health care and child care.

Her deep compassion infected us all. In a city where a lot of people can make a buck off an issue, Birdie poured her heart and soul into those issues and sought nothing in return.

Her family, her mother, her sisters, her children, and grandson all meant everything to Birdie. In fact, I think she would have liked to adopt me because sometimes she thought I needed a mom in town, and she was probably right.

Each time that she came in to see me in my office to offer her advice and wisdom, she would tap lightly on my door. No one else ever did that. I knew that I was either in trouble for a vote I had cast on the floor that day contrary to her suggestions, or I was in store for a witty argument on an upcoming vote in this body.

There will be many days and many nights ahead when I will miss that tapping at my door, but I will have many years of memories, many years of good counsel and many years of friendship upon which to reflect and rely.

Washington is a city of monuments hewn of stone and sewn with mortar. We can admire these great people and we should, but Washington is also the city that spreads forth the ray of hope for our Nation and our world. Birdie Kyle spent her life igniting that hope.

I was honored to know and work with Birdie. Without her, I would not have been as good a representative nor as good a person as I am. Many of us in this body can say that about our staff.

About right now, somebody up there in heaven is getting a morning briefing from Birdie, and I am sure it is not a pretty sight with all that needs to be righted in the world. We all know that heaven is in good hands with Birdie Kyle up there at the helm.

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SALVATION ARMY DISCRIMINATING AGAINST GAYS AND LESBIANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PENCE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor this evening because of a shocking story that appeared on the front page of the Washington Post this morning about a secret deal between, of all people, of all organizations, the Salvation Army, to support charitable choice in exchange for the issuance of a White House regulation, OMB Circular No. A-102, that would deny assistance to States or localities that require religious charities to adhere to their nondiscrimination laws as they apply to gay men and women. Now, of course, these nondiscrimination laws have to do with the activities of these religious charities that do not relate to their religions.

A political deal should be beneath the dignity of the Salvation Army, given its long Christian heritage, not to mention the President of the United States. It is a deal to discriminate under the table.

According to the lead document, this cannot be done in the legislative process very easily, so they had to do it by regulation. Charitable choice already contains a fatal flaw, because, as put forward by the administration, it would allow a religious organization to discriminate using government money by requiring people it hires to do a government task to be of their religion. That is a direct violation of Title VI and of the Constitution of the United States.

I am a former Chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. I